

**Howard Denis**

**Potomac Almanac - Year in Review**

2003 is the third year of the third millennium. It will also be the third year of my service on the Montgomery County Council. It's a great honor to represent you on the County Council and I am deeply grateful to Potomac for playing a key role in helping to make that possible.

The Potomac Master Plan was the highlight of my service this past year. I'm proud to have been in the position to pass this important document. It was highly complex and consumed a lot of the oxygen available to me during my first term.

There is no substitute for a well informed and balanced citizenry. That is the case in Potomac and nowhere was this more evident than in the preparation and passage of the Potomac Master Plan. The sine qua non of adoption was without a doubt the well informed, articulate, organized, balanced, and effective residents of Potomac. I was just the drummer. The challenge for the future is to implement the spirit of the Plan. The principle of Community Planning is very important in that regard. Callum Murray, the planner who worked so brilliantly to create and defend a well crafted Plan, will continue to guide the Council as we proceed to implementation.

The County Budget will be particularly difficult this year. We are dependent on the Federal Government, the State of Maryland, and the Washington Region for our overall

economic health. We in Montgomery County pride ourselves on a high quality of life and a mix of revenue that is unique. What happens in Annapolis and in Congress affects us. There are many stakeholders whose success or failure has a direct impact on our ability to deliver local services. If the current economic uncertainty lasts a year we can handle it. If there are more permanent adjustments then we in Montgomery County will have a truly serious problem. One way or the other, the County Council will pass a balanced budget this spring, with a target of late May, early June.

Beginning this year I will be serving on the Council's Education Committee and continue to serve on the Management and Fiscal Policy Committee. I have also been designated by my colleagues to be Lead Member for Personnel -- basically a subcommittee chair to review personnel matters. As a County we must compete with the Federal Government and our Regional partners to get the best people to be county workers, including police, fire services, and school teachers -- which to me is a basic starting point and one that I take very seriously.

The school budget is roughly half the overall County operating budget plus the capital budget. As a new member of the Education Committee, I look forward to making a contribution to enhancing quality education.

In all of these endeavors, and many others, I seek your ideas and input. Please invite me to visit, or visit me, or otherwise let me know what you are feeling and thinking.

A special thank you to the Potomac Almanac for its endorsement and for helping me to communicate directly with you, and to the West Montgomery Citizens Association, for reaching out to me when I was first elected in 2000, and for working with me in a cooperative way ever since.